

U.S.-Coalition Forces and Host Nations

DOTmLPF-P for Contingency Procurements

Part II

(Conclusion)

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My previous article in the May-June 2014 issue of *Defense AT&L* introduced the application of the DOTmLPF-P construct for implementing a host-nation (HN)-first contingency procurement strategy. That article covered Policy, Doctrine, Organization and Training. This concluding article focuses on the remaining areas of materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities. The recommendations herein are by no means exhaustive but are intended to provide some major areas to consider when executing a HN-first procurement policy such as we attempted to carry out in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom.

What is DOTmLPF-P?

To set the stage, I'll repeat the definition of DOTmLPF-P I gave in my previous article. The acronym DOTmLPF-P stands for Doctrine, Organization, Training, materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy. These are normally associated with the term "nonmateriel solution" when conducting capability-based assessments under the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS). *The JCIDS*

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Kabul, Afghanistan. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Manuel J. Martinez.
Inset: A vendor fair in Afghanistan. Coalition forces photo.

Manual (January 2012) Enclosure A defines a nonmateriel solution as “Changes to doctrine, organization, training, (existing) materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and/or facilities, implemented to satisfy one or more capability requirements (or needs) and reduce or eliminate one or more capability gaps, without the need to develop or purchase a new materiel solution.” The DOTmLPP-P construct can also be used to assess the possible effects of a materiel solution on those areas, most of which are captured in the Logistics functional area’s 12 Integrated Product Support elements. In this article, I use the DOTmLPP-P construct to provide recommendations for contingency procurement operations in which host-nation vendors (HNVs) are used to supply or manufacture products for host-nation government (HNG) forces under the auspices of U.S. contracts.

Materiel

Materiel in the context of DOTmLPP-P means nondevelopmental items such as commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) and government-off-the-shelf (GOTS). *The JCIDS Manual* states, “The letter ‘m’ in the acronym is usually lower case since Joint DCRs [DOTmLPP-P Change Recommendations] do not advocate new materiel development, but rather advocate increased quantities of existing materiel capability solutions or use in alternate applications.”

Products to be manufactured by HNVs should be nondevelopmental items that already exist in the U.S. inventory or that the U.S. Government has the rights to have manufactured by foreign vendors. This speeds procurement time, reduces cost of developing new products from scratch and negates the initial need to train HNG personnel in new product development.

The items should be close to or the same as those already manufactured in the host nation (HN) so a new industry doesn’t have to be stood up. Examples include textile/clothing/footwear, construction, and furniture, industries that usually exist in some shape or form in most countries. They should also be items with close transference to commercial items with both commercial internal and export market potential. Items should require minimum tailoring to the HN/contingency environment but the HNG should have input in tailoring existing items to meet its needs but be within the HNVs’ capability to manufacture. Finally, materials used by HNVs to manufacture products under U.S. or HNG procurement efforts should come from reliable sources with processes and physical features in place to prevent substandard or fake material from entering the supply chain.

Leadership and Education

The JCIDS Manual discusses Leadership and Education in the DOTmLPP-P context as “the product of a learning continuum that comprises training, experience, education and self-improvement. The role of joint professional military education is to provide the education needed to complement training, experience, and self-improvement to produce the most professionally competent individuals possible.” This article doesn’t

focus on formal military education so much as on applied leadership and basic education.

U.S.-Coalition leadership needs to be supportive of and patient with local acquisition efforts. These efforts will take time to initialize given the distance and time zones between deployed and U.S. support, movement of materials into and within the contingency environment, time to find qualified, trustworthy HNVs and mentoring of HNG personnel. U.S.-Coalition leadership also should set and manage reasonable expectations for HN-first procurements. My one year as Chief of Local Acquisition in Kabul, Afghanistan, taught me that initial procurement schedules usually slipped by at least 50 percent and several doubled, due to known and unknown factors such as import of raw materials through HN Customs, shutdown borders and site visits postponed due to increased threat conditions. We somewhat derogatorily referred to this phenomenon, along with a usually less hectic work pace in both HNG and HNV personnel, as occurring in “Afghan Time.” In a contingency deployment of 6 to 12 months, it can also be difficult for some U.S. leaders to accept that what they started when they arrived that they thought would yield results before they redeployed home actually did not get done. Young officers should be aware of this and be careful not to overpromise results to their leadership.

HNG leadership should ethically enforce HN procurement policies and prepare their procurement personnel to transition U.S.-sponsored procurements to HNG procurement organizations. They should work to eliminate graft and other forms of corruption, plus mitigate the use of nepotism to fill jobs with family members when there are more qualified candidates. These practices are sometimes culturally inculcated in the way of doing HN business and, therefore, alien to U.S.-Coalition mentors and difficult for HNG leadership to stop. The best practice I can recommend is for U.S.-Coalition personnel to lead by ethical example when conducting business in the HN so HNG and HNV personnel can see the benefits of conducting fair business practices according to procurement laws and policies. Ethical acquisition practices must start at the top if the workforce at large is to conduct business ethically. Having HNG procurement personnel shadow and observe U.S.-Coalition acquisition practices, especially those with the HNVs, can provide opportunities to mentor HNG procurement personnel in fair procurement practices.

While HNG procurement laws and policies may not mirror those of the U.S. or Coalition forces, the example set should be that of following the presiding procurement laws and policies, whatever they may be for a particular procurement, to foster an environment of trust between the government and commercial procurement entities.

The HNG needs a workforce educated in basic ethics, human rights and HN literacy to at least an eighth-grade level in order to conduct HNG procurements, understand U.S. specifications and deal with vendors ethically and within the laws of the HN.

In countries such as Afghanistan where literacy is very low (less than 40 percent in most areas) and there is a heritage of oral education and communication, training the HNG workforce to read in its own language is very important. A literate HNG workforce can read the procurement policies and laws instead of relying on others to do it and possibly misinterpret their applications. A literate HNG workforce also can better understand and produce specifications and instructions provided to HNVs and the HNV written proposals they receive in return. Finally, the HNG leadership and its subordinates can better hold each other accountable for decisions made if the decisions are documented for a literate workforce to read.

HNVs also need a workforce educated to at least an eighth-grade level in order to understand their rights and be prepared to obtain training on manufacturing quality goods. Like their HNG counterparts, HNV personnel need to understand the HN procurement laws and policies to hold the HNG and their HNV competitors accountable for ethical and correct procurement practices. The HNV workforce should be literate so it can understand the specifications for producing the items under contract in order to achieve better quality. A literate workforce will also promote better workplace conditions since the

first attempt a couple of times in Kabul, even when accompanied by two locals. That put us at risk and resulted in mission postponement (more of that “Afghan Time”).

It is not enough for the interpreters to know standard English. They also need to be versed in “DoD-ese,” which includes unique terms, some slang and many acronyms. English, with its synonyms and homonyms, is a tough language to understand in and of itself, and the version spoken by DoD personnel is even more so. Having an interpreter who is accustomed to working with American military forces, who can put what we say in proper context, and who has some technical background is a major benefit to conducting procurements with HNVs and mentoring HNG personnel who don’t speak English.

As a related example, the Defense Acquisition University conducted two tailored Production, Quality and Manufacturing (PQM) 201 courses for Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior (MoI) personnel in mid-2011. For the first course conducted for the MoD, an Afghan National Army captain, who was my liaison to the Afghan Acquisition Agency during my deployment, interpreted for the class. His English, which we initially thought passable for the class based on his

An aerial photograph of a densely populated urban area in Afghanistan, showing a mix of traditional mud-brick buildings and some more modern structures. The terrain is hilly and the overall color palette is dominated by earthy tones.

In a contingency deployment of 6 to 12 months, it can also be difficult for some U.S. leaders to accept that what they started when they arrived that they thought would yield results before they redeployed home actually did not get done.

workers will better understand their rights under whatever workplace safety, occupational health, pay and benefit requirements may exist in the HN laws.

Personnel

According to *The JCIDS Manual*, “The personnel component primarily ensures that qualified personnel exist to support joint capability requirements.” This is important for U.S.-Coalition and HNG procurement personnel and the HNV workforce.

U.S. local acquisition forces need to have proficient interpreters who are knowledgeable of the HNV environment. I list this first, since being able to communicate quickly and accurately with HNG and HNV personnel is critical in a contingency environment. The local interpreters also should be knowledgeable of the layout of the HNG and HNV places the U.S.-Coalition forces need to visit so they can guide them there, if that is needed. We were unable to find a new HNV location on the

performance in-theater, was inadequate in an academic environment. For the MoI course, a dedicated interpreter with a technical background (formal medical education) was hired and the course was much more effective and enjoyable.

U.S. local acquisition forces need to have proficient HN accountants to help them process vendor payments. Prompt, correct payment of HNVs for goods they accurately delivered in a timely manner is very important to all parties. Having HN accountants who can track deliveries with HNVs and discuss procurement-related issues with them is a necessity.

U.S. local acquisition forces should have personnel proficient in requirements development and translation of those into technical requirements, Request for Proposal (RFP) preparation, source selection conduct, contract management and quality assurance/management. However, while it doesn’t really matter in what specialty they are trained prior to deployment, it is

much easier to begin or continue procurements if personnel are familiar with acquisition practices before being deployed. In the end, as long as the personnel are trainable and willing to work, almost any career specialty can perform deployed HN-first acquisitions. We turned an Air Force captain who was a human resource specialist into our boot program manager in a few weeks and provided a little extra guidance along the way. *The Joint Manning Document* contains the rank, skills and training requisite for each deployed position which, in turn, directs predeployment training for personnel. However, personnel can be retasked en route or shortly after arriving in theater, so keep tabs on those with acquisition training slated for the local acquisitions unit to ensure the unit holds onto them, if possible.

HNG procurement and Customs organizations need enough personnel skilled in HNG procurement policies, processes and procedures. Personnel need to be paid adequately to reduce the temptation of graft. While it is valuable for HNG procurement personnel to observe how U.S.-Coalition forces procure items for them from their HNVs, ultimately the HNG procurement personnel must learn to do it for themselves according to their laws and policies. Their organizations must be adequately staffed with skilled, literate, ethical personnel paid an adequate salary so they are not enticed to augment their pay by illicit practices. In Afghanistan, the coalition forces established a set of capability maturity metrics with which to measure the performance of each ministerial organization. The capability of the ministerial personnel to do their jobs weighed heavily in the overall assessment. The HNG procurement personnel from field units to headquarters should be assessed at the beginning of the contingency and a capability development plan put in place to monitor their progress.

HNG logistics personnel, who will likely receive the procured goods directly from the HNVs, also must be skilled at properly accepting and rejecting items under the terms of the contract. This was a frequent problem during my deployment that sometimes resulted in our intervening with the Afghan logistics personnel to properly receive items for which we had contracted and paid HNVs to produce and deliver. Sometimes there was good reason for the rejection, other times not, and sometimes we waived minor discrepancies to get the products into the logistics systems so the Afghan troops could get them as soon as possible. While each situation was slightly different, over time the receiving personnel gained the experience and skill necessary to do their jobs.

HNVs need enough personnel skilled in manufacturing the items to be procured. As previously stated in the Materiel section, most countries have some indigenous industry that can be used to manufacture military-related items, especially dual-use items such as construction, clothing, footwear and furniture. Understanding these capabilities can allow the U.S.-Coalition forces to focus the HN-first procurement strategy to those items the HNVs are readily able to produce. Because military items sometimes require manufacturing to a higher standard than perhaps the HNVs are used to, having

a skilled, literate workforce is a key to successful procurements from HNVs.

Facilities

The JCIDS Manual defines facilities as “Real property consisting of one or more of the following: buildings, structures, utility systems, associated roads and other pavements, and underlying land.” Adequate, secure, accessible facility space is usually at a premium in a deployed environment for all parties.

U.S. local acquisition personnel need facilities on their forward operating base (FOB) in which to conduct source selections. This includes space to securely store vendor samples. On Camp Eggers in Kabul, we stored vendor samples in our building’s basement (it was a pre-existing Afghan building) and in standard shipping containers on or near the vehicle parking area. This was not optimal but was the only storage space we had. We worked with Kabul Regional Contracting Center (KRCC) to find a dedicated space with office equipment and supplies in which to conduct several source selections so we could maintain the integrity of the process.

HNG logistics organizations need secure, environmentally controlled facilities to store products received from HNVs. It does little good to procure quality products if they will not be stored and managed properly. Shipping containers are a poor substitute for an environmentally controlled, well-organized and managed warehouse and can lead to product breakdown due to temperature extremes and moisture invasiveness. Procurement personnel should ensure that the products they procure are packaged, stored and managed correctly so they do not degrade or suffer from pilferage, mishandling or hoarding before they are issued to the HNG forces for which they are intended.

HNVs need secure facilities to prevent theft and attacks/intimidation by criminals/insurgents, and safe facilities for their workers. They also need reliable infrastructure for their manufacturing facilities. This can be a combination of HNG infrastructure (power, water, sewer, roads) and HNV infrastructure (generators, walled compounds). Many vendors I toured in Kabul were inside walled compounds with their own security guards and generators since the city power grid was unreliable. U.S.-Coalition personnel should be aware of these private security guards, especially when they try to conduct short-notice or unannounced visits. Again, a good interpreter is key.

Conclusion

The DOTmLPP-P framework provides a useful basis in which to prepare for and analyze a HN-first procurement strategy. While the issues covered in these two articles are not by any means the last word, they do represent some lessons learned during my deployment as Local Acquisitions Chief in Kabul in 2010-2011 that can translate to other similar contingencies. 📧

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